

Hello,

My name is Kim Foss. I live in, Thomaston, Connecticut. I fully support HB 5372 An Act Concerning Dyslexia Instruction Offered in Teacher Preparation Programs.

I am the parent of an intelligent and articulate child who happens to have dyslexia, which impacted his learning from the age of 3 years old. When our child was attending a preschool program, we noticed that he could not keep track of the first letter of his first name, even within the same session of picking out plastic letters. He would pick the right color, wrong shape. Later on, he was unable to do the same with the letters of the alphabet. He was unable to rhyme. I suspected something was wrong.

- I told his kindergarten teacher that I thought he had dyslexia, nothing was done. I told his first grade teachers that I thought he had dyslexia, nothing was done. We paid for after school tutoring in First grade. He was put in **Leveled Literacy Intervention, which was not useful for his dyslexia.**
- I told the school special education department. In first grade that I thought he had dyslexia, nothing was done.
- I told the second grade teachers that I thought he had dyslexia, nothing was done. We paid for after school tutoring in Second grade. We sent him to Sylvan Learning Center. These remediation avenues had no effect at all.
- All the warning signs were there and I told my husband and the school that I suspected dyslexia and we had to do something ourselves. Despite hundreds of extra hours of instruction, our son could not read the words, "I, and, of in, to and the" consistently in 2nd grade! Testing was done and he was 'normal'.
- My husband and I took matters into our own hands and got him outside tutors that specialized in the style of reading instruction dyslexic students need. At the end of second grade, he met 2-3 days a week for the next 4 years with a private tutor that used the Orton Gillingham methods. He began to read.
- We were told that he needed to put in more effort, and not be lazy. The school had him tested and he was not evaluated for dyslexia. We were told he was not dyslexic. We were told that he had ADHD
- The school put him in a reading program, which had 5-8 students in a classroom, with no actual research based instruction for dyslexia. He did his homework there and sometimes made copies for teachers.
- In Third grade, we had him enroll in the Dyslexia Center in Waterbury, CT 3 days a week for the next 3 years. He read better, but not as fluently as his peers.
- The school was finally forced to have the necessary tests done and low and behold, found he was dyslexic at the end of 5th grade.
- The school had a tutor come to our house to work with our son, but she was not as skilled as the other interventionists. His reading scores dropped.
- He never really caught up to his grade level reading and feels sensitive about his skills as a reader...and probably always will.

The thing of it is, this is one disability that IF REMIDATED EARLY does not have to result in a lifetime of poor reading. This deficit can be dealt with economically in the beginning with the right research based interventions and the student can LEAVE special education rolls. The reading program used in school for dyslexic students will also teach students with no deficits. So it's a win, win, win scenario. If schools wait, the habits and training do not get as embedded and there will often be gaps in the reading that will show up in poor testing results. My story is all too familiar and plays like a skipped record among parents of children who have dyslexia...an otherwise normally intelligent child who fails at reading. If we had not intervened, we believe, our son would not be able to read. Administrators, Superintendents, ADHD evaluators, Guidance, Psychologists, Special Education and classroom teachers were not familiar with the simple clues to look for. Most everyone sees a normal child who is lazy and EVERYONE thinks it is only about flipping letters. No one wanted to see the diagnosis because nobody was familiar with dyslexia. Many people in charge of teaching our son had no idea what that was or how to help.

If the educational staff knew what to look for in young students and how to best teach them, it would change the course of a child's life. Whatever way you would teach to maximize learning for a dyslexic child, would also work with other learners because they will learn either way! The money spent on continued remediation of dyslexic students wears down depleted school resources AND the confidence of the students who feel worthless. According to Sally Shaywitz, MD who is a leading specialist in dyslexia knowledge,

*"Reading failure is one of a small group of public health problems that we can detect early on, treat effectively and even perhaps prevent. Schools can identify a child early and get them back on track before any serious damage is done. Phonemic awareness, the ability to notice, identify and manipulate the smallest particles that make up a word: phonemes, has the strongest relationship to later reading."*

If the money was spent on the front end, preparing all teachers to recognize the signs and remediate, this would change the course of the deficit. The money could be saved when students transition out of special education system because they no longer need help in reading. Some students who are acting up may be doing so because they cannot read. Teacher training is needed to teach them to read and there will be less time spent handling behavior issues, which takes away from the whole class learning. Some students like our son, who is cooperative, wait to come home to release the frustration.

House Bill 5372 calls to established a Dyslexia Instruction Standards and Accountability Council which will look at Institutes of Higher Education implementation of dyslexia legislation and accountability measures.

House Bill 5372 is essential to ensure that minimum knowledge and practice requirements are set for curriculum in Institutes of Higher Education offering programs in structured literacy.

House Bill 5372 is essential to meet the critical needs of students with Dyslexia by ensuring that past dyslexia legislation is implemented with fidelity.

This bill could ensure minimum standards for knowledge and practice within our institutions of higher education on how teachers are prepared in structured literacy and how this will benefit both teachers and students.

There was an old adage: "***A stitch in time saves nine.***" Such is the case with students who have all of capability, but one glitch in learning. If dyslexia is caught and mended early, the time money and human toll would not have to be spent.

Sincerely & Prayerfully,

Kim M.N. Foss, parent, voter & teacher